



**Persatuan Kebajikan Sokongan Keluarga
Selangor & KL** (PPM-011-10-24072020)
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PRESS STATEMENT

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PR Status of Malaysian Women Abroad Must Not Impact Citizenship Rights of Their Children

Family Frontiers and the Malaysian Mothers' Network refer to the Home Ministry's Parliamentary written reply dated 29 October 2024 that a Malaysian mother's permanent residence (PR) status in another country will be considered in citizenship applications for her overseas-born children. This is in response to Bukit Bendera MP YB Syerleena Abdul Rashid's question as to why Malaysian mothers with PR status abroad had their children's citizenship applications under Article 15(2) of the Federal Constitution rejected despite declining foreign citizenship and planning to return to Malaysia.

We commend the passing of the constitutional amendment granting Malaysian mothers the automatic right to confer citizenship to their children born overseas and appreciate the Minister of Home Affairs' commitment to resolve pending citizenship applications under Article 15(2) on an expedited timeline. **However, it is troubling that Malaysian mothers' permanent residence status in another country could still jeopardise their children's applications.**

It is deeply concerning that we continue to observe rejections within our network—suggesting that Malaysian mothers' permanent residency abroad could be used as a basis to deny their children's citizenship eligibility.

Out of the recent rejections recorded within our network, we note that nearly 80% of the cases involve Malaysian mothers holding PR in another country. This development appears to signify a worrisome interpretation of PR as indicative of "foreign allegiance," when in reality, PR does not equate to citizenship and is simply a means of maintaining stable residency abroad. For instance, in jurisdictions like Hong Kong, one can achieve PR after a certain period of residency without it leading to citizenship. PR status provides stability but should not be mistaken for a renouncement of one's own nationality or a factor impeding children's rightful citizenship.

Does our own country expect us to face such uncertainty just because we live and work abroad? Holding PR in another country doesn't lessen our loyalty to Malaysia. Many have asked why I don't simply seek citizenship where I live now. But I am Malaysian—it's where I grew up, it's part of who I am, and that will never change. It breaks my heart that my children's citizenship applications were rejected, despite our commitment to Malaysia, shown by taking a long drive to the Malaysian Embassy in Sweden twice from

Denmark when our two children were just babies, strictly following the regulations before our children turned one year old? - Chia Ai Lin

Permanent Residence Is Not Citizenship

Permanent Residence is a residency status, not a declaration of allegiance. PR holders maintain their Malaysian citizenship and are fully entitled to uphold their rights under the Malaysian Constitution. Do Malaysian men, holding PR status abroad experience these same restrictions on their children's citizenship? Is their allegiance to Malaysia questioned?

Is the citizenship of children born to Malaysian men discretionary because of his permanent residence status elsewhere? Mine isn't half the vote or half the tax, so there's no basis for giving me half the right! "Equality" as a concept cannot be this difficult to understand! Shamila Unnikrishnan - a Malaysian mother with two children working in Kenya.

The Right to Family Unity Must be Protected

Malaysian mothers should not face additional barriers to secure their children's citizenship based on PR status abroad, which is simply a legal tool allowing families stability and access to essential resources. PR does not confer political rights or imply a severance of ties with Malaysia. Rather, it empowers women to support their families, an aspect crucial to any Malaysian mother seeking the best for her children, no matter her country of residence.

A Call for Review and Transparency in Citizenship Decisions

Family Frontiers urges the Ministry of Home Affairs to review citizenship rejections involving PR-status mothers to ensure decisions are made in the spirit of the Malaysian Constitution. We also call for greater transparency on the reasons behind citizenship rejections, which currently remain unclear.

Moving Forward for Equitable Policy

We urge policymakers to recognize that all Malaysian mothers—irrespective of their PR status—deserve the assurance that their children's rightful citizenship will be protected and to follow the rule of law.

Additionally, we also urge the Government to implement clear, robust policies to protect those who will be negatively impacted by the remaining regressive amendments that were not decoupled from the mothers' amendment. We hope all children of Malaysian parents, biological or adopted, can secure citizenship promptly, regardless of the parents' gender, marital status, or the child's birthplace.

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